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Synopsis of Important Articles.

The Ark and the Animals.* In a certain scientific circle it has of late been asserted that the story of the ark is positively proved to be a legend by the fact that it would be an absolute impossibility to place two of every known species of land animals in the space of the ark. Now this is simply an arithmetical problem. The biblical statement is that the ark was three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide, and thirty cubits high. The length of the cubit has been settled as between nineteen and twenty inches; but if we take it at only eighteen inches, then the surface of one deck of the ark would be thirty-three thousand, seven hundred and fifty square feet. As to the number of species of animals, naturalists differ very largely in their classification, but taking the extremest estimate by a high authority, Wallace (see his "Distribution of Animals") there are two thousand, four hundred and fifteen. In the ark there are said to have been seven each of the ten species of clean animals, and of all other species two each, making four thousand, nine hundred of the land mammalia. It is stated by Prof. Ward, of Rochester, that the average size of each animal would be about that of the common house cat. Allowing, then, five square feet for each animal, there would be room for all the four thousand, nine hundred, and there would still be left nine thousand, two hundred and fifty feet of unoccupied space, on a single deck of the ark. This would be abundant room for two representatives each of all the species of birds, reptiles, lizards and insects. But it is reasonable to suppose, from the biblical description, that the ark had three decks, each of this size named above, or thereabouts, so that there was ample room for all the animals, for food for a year, and for Noah's family. So that at least this argument against the historicity of the ark is proved groundless.

This is mathematical demonstration, and conclusive so far as it goes. But it is only a small fraction of the problem which the deluge of Genesis presents.

Assyrian Aids to Hebrew Chronology.† The dates in Hebrew history that have been fixed beyond controversy by the cuneiform inscriptions of Assyria are few, group themselves together quite closely, and fall within a comparatively late period. They are but seven in number, and cover only the time from 854 B. C. to 701 B. C. No Assyrian inscription has yet been found that makes it possible to determine the exact time of a single event in Hebrew history earlier than the reign of Ahab. Nor can the chronology of the short period indicated be settled definitely even with the assistance of the cuneiform records. Nevertheless, the dates that have been ascertained are of the utmost importance as furnishing starting-points for approximately correct computations. The seven are as follows: (1) 854, Shalmaneser II. defeats Ahab of Israel. (2) 842, Shalmaneser II. receives tribute from Jehu, son of Omri. (3) 738, Tiglath Pileser III. receives tribute from Menahem of Samaria. (4) 734,

* By Prof. Howard Osgood, D. D., in *S. S. Times*, Feb. 6, 1892.

† By Prof. Nathanael Schmidt, in *Hamilton Theological Seminary Journal*, Feb. 1892.

Tiglath Pileser III. invades Israel, takes two districts north of Samaria, causes Pekah to be killed, and establishes Hoseah on the throne, exacting from him a heavy tribute. (5) 722, Sargon captures Samaria and carries away a large portion of the population. (6) 734, Ahaz of Judah pays tribute to Tiglath Pileser III. (7) 701, Sennacherib invades Judah, takes a large number of captives, plunders the land, and receives a heavy tribute from Hezekiah. We may be certain of these dates, because the historic inscriptions on which they are based are originals; they are contemporaneous records; they are not put into a large chronological framework; they only propose to record events, without pragmatism; the events referred to are definitely dated either by the year of the king in whose reign they happened, or by the name of the *limmu*, or archont of the year; the length of each reign can be determined by the limmi-lists, which are for this period under consideration complete; they can be verified by the Babylonian records, the synchronistic tablets, and the Canon of Ptolemy. There are also certain dates that are measurably certain: (1) 803, Ramman Nirari III. receives tribute from Israel, when in all probability Jehoahaz was king. (2) 740, Azariah of Judah takes part in the Syrian coalition against Tiglath Pileser III. (3) 711, Azuri of Ashdod incites his neighbors to rebellion, Judah joins the league, and Sargon smites the king of Judah. (4) 675, Manasseh of Judah pays tribute to Esarhaddon. (5) 667, Manasseh of Judah pays tribute to Ashurbanipal. (6) 1400, One of the correspondents of the Assyrian king receives dispatches from his governors in Palestine informing him of the movements of Hebrews in the southern districts of the land. With the data at our command it is not impossible to compute with reasonable accuracy the date of this correspondent. But this is the least sure of all the dates.

All that can be ascertained concerning the Old Testament history through Assyriological study and investigation is of particular interest now. This information concerning comparative dates will be found useful.

The Story of Cain and Abel.* The prophetic narrator, or the compiler, has selected the narrative; he has not attempted to give a complete story, but in extracting and condensing from the tradition has qualified, abbreviated, or omitted, that which did not seem suitable to, or was in actual disagreement with, the revealed religion of Israel. Thus, we are not told the reason why divine preference was accorded to the sacrifice of Abel, nor how that preference was made known. The ancient view that an offering of animals was preferred above an offering of fruits of the earth, or that Abel had more correctly performed the ritual of the offering, are mere guess-work. In the true spirit of Israelite prophecy, he may have wished to emphasize the teaching that it was the spirit of the offerer, and not the mode of the offering, which from the first determined the acceptability of every sacrifice in the sight of God. Nor is the mode recorded by which the divine preference for Abel's sacrifice was indicated. The omission has been fancifully supplied by conjecturing that fire from heaven came down and devoured the offering of Abel. So also we are not informed as to what the sign was which God appointed for Cain. It was not a "mark set" upon him (see Revised Version), for that would have everywhere made him known instead of being a pledge to him of security. We get perhaps some idea of what the sign may have been from the rainbow which was "set" as a token for Noah. The narrator's purpose is to select from the

* By Prof. H. E. Ryle, M. A., in *Expository Times*, Feb. 1892.